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OCCASIONAL MUSINGS

GEORGE PRESTON MAINS

Methodist
Historical Society

*Southern California-Arizona
Conference*



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Alladena,
(Nov. 1928)

OCCASIONAL MUSINGS

**OTHER BOOKS BY
GEORGE PRESTON MAINS**

LIFE OF FRANCIS ASBURY

MODERN THOUGHT AND TRADITIONAL FAITH

**SOME MORAL REASONS FOR BELIEF IN THE
GODHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW AGE

DIVINE INSPIRATION

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

LIFE OF JAMES MONROE BUCKLEY

PREMILLENNIALISM

UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP

LIFE'S WESTWARD WINDOWS

SCIENCE, CHRISTIANITY, AND YOUTH

MENTAL PHASES IN A SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY

OCCASIONAL " MUSINGS

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By
GEORGE PRESTON MAINS, 1844-
" 1930

New York
1928

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TO MY ONLY LIVING AND
GREATLY BELOVED GRAND-
CHILD, MRS. PAUL ELY
KYBURG, I MOST AFFECTION-
ATELY SUBSCRIBE THESE
WAYSIDE "MUSINGS" WHICH
HAVE COME TO EXPRESSION
IN THE LATE STAGES OF A
LONG LIFE-JOURNEY.

CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

PART I

THE MAN DIVINE

THE ADVENT.....	15
FROM BABE TO MAN.....	16
THE GOSPELS.....	19
THE SINLESS MAN.....	23
CALVARY.....	31

PART II

MISCELLANIES

LIFE'S MEANING.....	37
DUTY.....	39
GOD AND MAN.....	40

FRIENDLY SIDELIGHTS

A BIRTHDAY SURPRISE.....	49
"BON VOYAGE" TO MY GRANDDAUGHTER.....	50
A CHILD'S BOXED ROSE.....	51
AFTER THOUGHTS OF ROBERT GREEN INGERSOLL.....	52
IDENTITY.....	64
SUNSET.....	65
OUR LITTLE BOY.....	66
THE LIFE IMMORTAL.....	73

Author's Foreword

IN presenting this little volume to any who may be interested in its existence, I must frankly disclaim for myself the gifts of a poet born. Attempts at poetical expression have little place in my literary history. These MUSINGS, rather, represent exceptional diversions which now and then have occupied my more leisurely age. There is a tradition that Socrates after reaching his seventieth year began the study of, and acquired some proficiency in, the art of music. Why not? I know of no law, nor of any late date in one's years, which should forbid new ventures in construction. If, however, some "higher critic" should deny distinctive merit to the poetical products as herewith presented, I would be considerate of his judgment. Lowell is responsible for saying that even Milton, greatest in English epic, wrote some poor poetry. He goes so far as to indorse a saying that the great Epic itself is as the "invention of a barbarous age to set off wretched matter and lame meter."

So, however many "bad verses" one may think he discovers in these MUSINGS, let us hope that at least some others may be found of redeeming merit.

One cannot read Browning especially, nor even Tennyson or Whittier without discovering in them some forced rimes. I have a somewhat educated sympathy with or for these faults. I have learned

that ideal meter and rime may prove a very difficult team for easy driving on the highways of poetical imagination. At critical points one or the other of them is sure to balk, and will require all sorts of coaxing to get him rightly geared for further journey.

In any event, some close, and usually wise, friends have counseled me to give printed publicity to these MUSINGS. I have some confidence that the lessons sought in their statement are both sane and wholesome. I have at least some friends both near and dear who will welcome these products of my brain and pen. The reader may bear in mind that this publication is in no sense a mercantile venture, but a brochure prepared chiefly for a limited circle of personal friends.

G. P. M.

Altadena, California, 1928.

OCCASIONAL MUSINGS

PART I
THE DIVINE MAN

THE MAN DIVINE

The Advent

LONG years ago o'er the Syrian plains,
One star-lit night, were heard the strains
Of wondrous song, a song unknown to
earth,

By angels sung of a new birth
In Bethlehem town.

Where shepherds kept their flocks on open ground
A glory from Heaven shone around;
And near them stood an angel of the Lord
Who calmed their fears with gracious word
Of Peace on earth, Good Will to men.

And soon there came on wings an angel throng
Who to sheep-guards sang the gladsome song;
Song of heavenly cheer for all the earth,
The Advent song of a Saviour's birth:
A joy of nations yet to come.

The Lord's angels came from Heaven to earth
Judah's shepherds to tell of His birth;
And princes renowned their tribute paid
To Mary's Babe, in a manger laid:
Most honored Babe of all the world.

From Babe to Man

IN NAZARETH of Galilee,
Not far from Chinnereth's Sea,
Christ dwelt for nearly thirty years,
Nor in the records much appears
His youthful life.

The ancient scribe in briefest word
Notes how He, the future Lord,
As youth in strength and wisdom too
In God's favor ever grew:
This wondrous Child.

This message from the silent years
Age on age the witness bears
That Christ alone of all mankind
Ever wrought with sinless mind
From youth to manhood full.

Yet though His life in sinless mold
Was cast, none in thought can hold
From tempting test of life and deed
Christ as man was ever freed
From first to last.

The fiercest conflict ever fought
In the world of moral thought
Was matched by Christ 'gainst Satan's throne
When alone, in wilds unknown,
Christ Himself the victory won.

And not in all historic time,
Then or now in any clime,
Was ever moral vict'ry won,
Than this wrought by Mary's Son,
Of worth so great for all mankind.

In all the life of Adam's race
Can be found no single trace
Of man great or small, or high or low,
Whose life may a record show
Of sinless worth, save Christ.

Christ was from peasant-mother born
Mid environment forlorn;
The ages through the wonder grows
That from source so meek arose
Most godlike soul of human kind.

And wonders never cease to grow
As the burgh we come to know:
Nazareth bore most common name,
Known at best of vulgar fame,
It seemed no place for noble birth.

Jesus was no recluse shut in
As guarded by a wall from sin;
Mid evil life and scandal free,
Tempted in all points as we
He faultless grew in moral worth.

His social rank was of the grade
Earned from toil in humble trade;
In wondrous years he still was known
As "Carpenter," Joseph's Son,
And people marveled at His fame.

Yet Nazareth, beauty-crowned,
With green hills circled round,
And landscapes rich in floral dress—
All served deeply to impress
Christ's artistic sense inborn.

Then, in all homes of Hebrew thought,
As of priceless treasure sought,
At dawning thought of ev'ry youth
Parents with most holy truth
Must their children's minds imbue.

And, 'twas true of Jesus' mother,
As in all the world no other,
That in her most deeply wrought
There lived in treasured thought
A mission holy for her Son.

Thus Nazareth the lesson taught
That mid life drab, poor in thought,
There may arise a holy home
From whose nurture still may come
A perfect human life.

The Gospels

LITTLE reck taking of fabulous lore
From olden to present days come down,
Time does not dull the lure of stories four
Which have set one name in wide renown—
Name of Christ, the Nazarene.

These stories writ by scribes of old, as new
As springtime's growth, with widening sway
Forever hold man's thought in vision true
Of the peerless life of all earth's day—
God's Christ-Man.

A wondrous feature of these stories old,
Composed by authors now unknown,
Is that these artless writers should unfold
The divinest Life to history known
In words that never die.

Millions of books, all the centuries through,
As brief insect life, have come and gone;
If only great books one should read, none new,
Of a thousand books not more than one
Would he ever know.

When these stories with great books we compare,
From Homer's song and Plato's far-off day,
From the literatures of time, great and rare,
None o'er heart and mind has held such sway
As Syria's Gospels simply told.

These Gospels, however ancient their past,
Still untouched by ravage of time,
Are now reprinted in numbers so vast
As far to outrun works most sublime
By genius created.

The Gospel authors sought with single aim,
In self-forgetful, reverent thought,
To exalt alone the glorious Name
Of Him who in their own hearts had wrought
A faith so wondrous, divine.

The greatness with which they in fragments deal,
Was greatness far beyond their skill to trace;
Yet in fadeless outlines they much reveal
The Life most divine of all the race—
The life of Mary's Son.

The Gospel claims for Christ, forever true,
Clothe His life earthly with life divine;
In portrayal vivid they bring to view
One God-Man in whom shall ever shine
God's chief glory in man.

The Gospel stories from first to the last
With heaven's wonders are strangely fraught;
Not in all earthly life, all ages past,
As in Christ Jesus was ever wrought
So wondrously God's life in man.

Christ's name "Jesus" was angel-given.

To Him God the distinctive mission gave,
Greatest gift to earth from heaven,
That He as Redeemer from sin might save
The sin-doomed race of mankind.

In measured years, perhaps less than three,
Christ wrought and taught in manner sublime
For peoples of Judæa and Galilee,
And not less for mankind of all time,
Did He His ministries give.

Christ's death, the most tragic crime of the race,
In these Gospels is vividly told:
If this were all, vain were attempt to trace
Through time, or to present thought unfold,
A life that perished so long ago.

Christ's Chosen, constant as their rythmic breath,
Thought of him as to be Zion's King:
That His crown lay beyond the gates of death
They never could to their credence bring:
'Twould seem defeat of Israel's hopes.

That which those nearest Him but little knew,
Nor could apprehend, by Christ was known,
And ever was in His thought held in view,
That through sacrifice and death alone
Could He His Kingdom win.

To His betrayal and crucifixion,
Events to His disciples foretold,
He added a word of clear conviction
That soon living they would Him behold:
But this to them was mystery blind.

The meaning of Calvary, still far from known,
Its import large to all moral races,
On Hermon's heights, in light wondrous was shown
When Prophets from heavenly places
With Christ communed concerning His
death.

And later, all Gospel writers unite
To proclaim Christ as vanquishing death;
They make Him spoiler of death's dreaded might,
Redeemer of all who dwell beneath
The sun that shines over earth.

In after years, and in most radiant light,
To one vision-rapt on Patmos' shore
Christ appears, clad beyond all human might,
Saying, "Behold I live evermore,
And over death and hell hold absolute
reign."

The Sinless Man

“GREATEST study of mankind is man”—
Man as grouped in many races;
But through all the years since time began,
Even in most favored places,
Was never found a sinless man.

Till Jesus came to history new,
From noblest life of all the past,
From men resplendent in virtues true,
Whose fame shall live while time shall last,
No sinless man was ever known.

Yet a sinless life for Christ is shown
By faithful witnesses sane and true;
By men in life He called His own,
By those who did most closely view
His daily life in Palestine.

In stories told by these ancient men,
Immortal as the years of time,
Through ages traced from now till then,
The portrait of a Life sublime
To wondering thought seems ever new.

And still the historic wonder grows
In wid'ning creed of One Divine,
Of one sinless Life which history knows,
A Life once liv'd in Palestine
Long centuries ago.

Now, if we would know what in His age,
By friends and foes of Christ was thought,
The records writ on the olden page,
As though of yesterday seem wrought,
Give evidence complete.

By angelic prophet was foreshown
To Mary that her future Son
Should be among men as "Jesus" known
As He would save, the Guiltless One,
Mankind from the bonds of sin and death.

The Chief charged with the crucifixion,
Roman, inured to tragic scene,
Declared, moved with dread conviction:
"On the Cross of the Nazarene
An innocent Man was slain."

To Pilate's wife there came in troubled dream
Such thoughts of Mary's sinless Son
That message, though it might ill beseem,
"Have thou naught to do with this just One"
Was sent by her to Pilate's bench.

Pilate himself was so impressed
That when the mob, to frenzy wrought,
Christ would destroy, he to all confessed
Christ without fault, and himself sought
A criminal for death, and Christ to save.

Judas, lowest in "hell's frozen deep"
By Dante placed, for paltry gain
Betrayed his Lord. That for bribe so cheap
He most innocent One had slain;
In deep remorse he doomed himself to
suicide.

Christ's foes confirm His freedom from guilt.
By witnesses false suborned
They, in sinful rage, false charges built
The one Life by all grace adorned
In wickedness deep to destroy.

Witnesses, on whom we surely rely,
Are those who in life had nearest view
Of Christ, who for Him themselves did die,
Whose daily life they closely knew,
Were Christ's chosen apostles.

John, one by Christ especially loved,
Who fondly leaned on Jesus' breast,
In later years by doubt unmoved,
Holding his past in review, confessed:
"Christ himself was free from sin."

Peter in Pentecost days declared
That Christ was holy and just—God's Son,
And this to men who guilty shared
In the vile death of that Sinless One
In Whom God's glory forever shall shine.

This same apostle in later years,
His thought of Christ mature and sure,
Still to his judgment of Christ adheres
That He sinless, in speech most pure,
Lived all His life on earth.

Saint Paul, apostle greatest of all,
While obsessed in most mad career,
In scene of wonderment heard Christ's call,
And thence to his own latest year
The truth proclaimed of a sinless Christ.

An unknown writer of words inspired
In terms most rare, sublime, declares:
In Heaven exalted, most admired,
Christ Divine in God's glory shares—
The Man alone as sinless known.

If now, Christ's life, as to us made known,
We for ourselves would closely scan;
After search keenest we still must own
Him, of all men, divinest Man
To mankind ever known.

Christ's life with men in revealing light
Was lived. A scrutiny intense
From friend and foe on Him, day and night,
Was focused without suspense.
No life more exposed was ever known.

Moreover, of all holiest known
Among men, Christ to sin and wrong
Most sensitive, as by records shown,
On His pathway must all along
Assaults most evil endure.

If He should display one moral lapse,
Or slightest cleft from rectitude;
Or stung to resentments wrong, perhaps
From taunts by minds evil imbued—
One single sin would mark His fall.

But when His great life was near its close,
With all His past in full review,
He could safely challenge friends and foes—
All who knew His lifetime through—
To convict Him of a single sin.

“If Christ is of sinlessness possessed,
He cannot feel an evil lure;
Moral strength, as by most confessed,
For himself man cannot secure
Save in conflict with wrong to triumph.

“Christ’s sinlessness, then, is only a myth”—
This is judgment of shallow thought;
Christ was born a normal man, with
Such nature full in Him wrought
Through which man may morally grow.

Christ's life from first to its latest hour,
In all His self-deciding years,
With constant growth in moral power
Throughout His entire life appears
Because of His victories won.

With normal passions Christ was endowed.
Still, if a man is passion's slave,
Passions will both mind and soul becloud
With moods which can only deprave
His soul's deepest life.

Sin is not to know an evil lure.
'Tis only when the moral will
Gives harbor to sin and thought impure
That evil can with guilty thrill
The soul debauch.

Reasons for Christ's sinless life appear
In this: He was most normal born,
And as His mind grew from year to year,
In balanced will, and holy scorn
For sin, the right He always chose.

We have judged of Christ as without sin;
If this were all, how great its worth,
'Twere not enough. If Christ is to win
From sin man's wayward life on earth,
Far more than sinless He must be.

Of all positive virtues possessed,
His love of God supreme: His love
For man, by all races confessed,
As wide as the skies earth above,
The needs of all nations embrace.

Duty's path led Him to Calvary's cross,
His righteousness was absolute:
His thought, clear as light, from error's dross
Was free: and far beyond compute,
His kindness reached to suffering life.

'Twas His meat and His drink God's will to do.
His moral life gave full response
To God's own thought. Never to earth's view
In all the life of man, not once,
Was one so divine as Jesus Christ.

From whence, a query forever pressed,
Himself born of peasant-woman,
Could come as He so Heaven-blest,
How from source so humbly human,
Could Christ come to bear a name Divine?

In alien and subject-province born,
A province ruled by pagan might,
Of race by the rulers held in scorn:
Christ's glory seen on Hermon's height
Must be a glory not of earth born.

By men obsessed we have been told
That Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John
From sources mythic to us unfold
Traditions of some wondrous one
From whom they did their Christ create.

When Raphael's fame in art most great
To common art must yield its place;
When rustics most common themselves create
Dramas greater than Shakespeare's plays:
Then Christ as myth may be received.

Still the Gospel words, sincere and true,
With an ever-increasing lure,
With widening sway the ages through,
Reveal for all the image pure
In Christ of a life Divine.

Lives of men may go, and time grow old—
But coming time can never dim
The Gospel stories so long since told
Of Christ: For God doth honor Him
As evermore His glorious Son.

Calvary

O N the boundless planes of God's love for man
Calvary rises in height sublime.
Its meaning Divine man's thought cannot
scan.

It was the scene in historic time
For mankind of God's greatest drama.

For Christ a doom of most dread infliction,
In form most tragic beneath the skies,
A criminal's death by crucifixion—
Most cruel which pagan thought could devise—
Was enacted as man's greatest crime.

To sinners prompted by murderous hate
Christ yielded His life irresistible;
His violent death he did oft forestate,
And by repetition insistent
Declare that His mission by death must be
crowned.

No theory of Christ's incarnation,
Of him by Golgotha's anguish torn,
As attempted by creed's explanation,
Or from poetic Imagery born:
Has as yet Calvary's mystery measured.

Dante's inventive imagination,
Himself confessed, was at a loss,
Though he had genius great for creation,
The mystery to explain of the Cross
On which the Lord Christ died.

With the glide of time from Calvary's days,
Through all the centuries since then gone,
Christ's Cross, as haloed with sunrise rays,
With ever-growing glory has shone
Upon the thought of mankind.

The symbol once of Crime's darkest disgrace,
Of pagan cruelty type extreme—
Calvary's Cross now commands highest place
As emblem of God's love supreme
For man's sinful race.

As a glory crowning the Gothic spire,
As emblem sacred at worship's shrines—
A Cross, pagan-born, an instrument dire,
Of doom tragic, now glorious shines
Over the earth far and wide.

Whatever the truth in all dogmas told,
How far the reach of poetic thought,
In attempt its mysteries to unfold,
In coming ages, as if newly wrought,
Calvary will new lessons disclose.

Still, one Divine fact must ever remain:
In Christ was revealed God's ideal Man,
And to win man's love God did not refrain
At price of infinite cost to plan
Redemption of man through the death of
His Son.

The Christ of God man incarnate became:
In a human life from woman born,
He wrought in love matchless, spotless in name,
For sinful men, for men most forlorn,
To reveal for them God's redemption from
sin.

From God's holy presence the Lord Christ came
Man's lowliest life on earth to share;
He endured the Cross, despising its shame;
Hence forevermore God will declare
Christ's name of all names most exalted.

PART II
MISCELLANIES

MISCELLANIES

Life's Meaning

O SOUL! This restless soul of mine!
Endowed with powers Divine,
Why should'st thou urge the fruitless quest
To find on earth thy perfect rest?

No earth-born fruit from West or East
Can give thy moral hunger feast;
No earthly founts, at best or worst,
Can ever slake thy spirit's thirst.

God that gave thee spirit being
Made thee too for moral seeing;
He gave thee life enduring far
Beyond the life of earth or star.

Like to His own, He made thy mind,
Thus stamping thee of Godlike kind;
His mind creative through all days
Thine own to trace His wondrous ways.

Distinct from all the lesser whole,
God's moral life lights thee, my soul;
With God's own Spirit thou art kin,
His Spirit's life thy light within.

Mountains may melt, and ages haste,
Thy life with God shall never waste;
Through endless years thy life shall shine
In growing light of Life Divine.

Thy law below be Christly creed
Of lofty thought, and kindly deed,
So when thy life from earth departs
It still may live in grateful hearts.

So live thou nobly, O my soul!
Keep life's true vision on the goal
Divinely set before thine eyes
Till God shall crown thee in the skies.

Duty

O Man! Whereso'er thy place,
Do well thy work,
No duty shirk,
Nor from the Truth depart.
In ev'ry task take heart:
Thou doest all before God's face.

Forces that gird the soul with might
Are quietly wrought
In dutiful thought;
In the doing of deeds
That heal human needs:
So, thou may'st walk in noonday light.

If thou with loyal will pursue
To the end of the way,
To the close of the day;
And, as in God's sight,
Seek the True and Right,
Then God will guide thy journey through.

Thy course of life will soon be run.
The seasons fly,
Soon thou must die.
If to-day come toil and sorrow,
Heaven's morn will come to-morrow;
Thy deathless crown will soon be won.

God and Man

OUR God, enthroned above the spheres,
Dwells everywhere in widest space;
His scepter rules the thronging years,
His power is felt in every place.

He lights the fires of distant suns,
His potent might all worlds obey;
His thought the swiftest light outruns,
And in His hands the lightnings play.

A human question, fraught as fate
With all the hopes of all mankind,
Is: Does God, so transcendent, great,
Our human welfare bear in mind?

Will He who guides the march of stars,
And makes the worlds obey His voice;
Will He more than Pagan Mars
In the weal of man rejoice?

The fact of God transcends all thought,
His immanence in nature vast,
His wonders in all spaces wrought,
Will awe man's mind while time shall last.

The spaces vast inspire our awe
And prompt to meanly thought of man;
God's reign through universal law
Must hold for man but meager plan!

But man is here: and man is mind.
His thought in winged flight surveys
All heights, all depths, nor is confined
To things of earth nor mortal days.

Deception lurks in thought of size.
The worlds that people boundless space,
That glorify the nightly skies—
All yield to man superior place.

The glory of the distant suns
Is by these suns themselves unknown;
Their story which through eons runs
Is known and read by man alone.

Not bulk but value measures worth.
Not worlds inert in boundless air,
Nor aught else found in sky or earth,
Can with the worth of man compare.

Material immensities, at most,
Are lifeless, soulless, without thought;
The starry worlds, a shining host,
Although themselves divinely wrought,

Are as lone mansions of the void
Till God's own thought in them shines forth;
Upon them mind must be employed
To give them any sort of worth.

The ordered systems rise to birth
Not from any power their own;
Both far-off star and tiny earth
Obey the scepter of God's throne.

The lordly worlds of boundless space
No laws upon themselves impose:
They lie inert in law's embrace,
And thus God's ruling might disclose.

The countless life of land and sea,
The far-back life of fossiled time,
The million species yet to be:
Are topics in themselves sublime.

Not ancient time, nor flight of light,
Can bound the empire of God's sway;
When morn first rose from cosmic night
God sceptered darkness into day.

God's blazing throne lights lifeless space,
Yet all this space were wanting still
The coming of a godlike race
Divine in thought and moral will.

In all the infinite array
Of stellar suns and lesser spheres,
No single shrine where spirits pray
Nor shrine of science once appears.

It were as though God sat alone
Amid His vast creation wrought;
No worshiper before His throne,
No knowing mind to trace His thought.

We dimly trace God's wondrous thought,
We know not where His work began;
From dateless ages God has wrought
His work divine to crown in man.

However far the cosmic plan
May date from age to ages past;
From first to last God purposed man
To make His work complete at last.

Creative work through eons past
With sentient life had filled the earth;
Yet mid it all from first to last
No moral life had come to birth.

It was God's purpose to enthrone
One who should His image bear;
A life in kinship to His own,
Who might creation's lordship share.

Then first mid earth's throng'd life came forth
MAN—founder of a race divine—
With mind and soul of godlike worth
In which God's life shall ever shine.

The riddle of earth's long travails
And jungle life at last is solved;
God's Fatherhood of man reveals
Creation's moral ends evolved.

Man with God's own sonship crowned
Bears distinct stamp of priceless worth;
For not in all the world is found
A creature so divine of birth.

The stately ship that sails the seas,
Most richly stored for ports afar,
May not founder in the lees,
Nor perish on some hidden bar.

So man endowed with godlike worth,
With mental powers for endless gain,
Himself transcends all life of earth,
And he immortal must remain.

If men His image truly bear
God's Fatherhood is pledge divine
That they His life shall ever share,
Forever mid His glories shine.

If reason sways the Father's throne,
God's love not less than human love
With ceaseless care must guard its own,
Else life were vain where'er we roam.

FRIENDLY SIDELIGHTS

FRIENDLY SIDELIGHTS

A Birthday Surprise

DEAR MR. HECKER: FRIEND AND BROTHER—

We, your fond friends, both loving and true,
Have come together to visit you;
Possession bold we take of your home;
We assume you are glad we have come.

A little bird in our ears has sung
That you, who always seem so young,
Have in excursions seventy-two
As many circling years passed through.

This bird-song seems to us a fable.
We move to lay it on the table;
If we must believe the story true,
Then time has gently dealt with you.

You certainly seem most jolly young.
Old age on you sure never has flung
A mantle shadowy of the years,
Nor haunted your life with ghostly fears.

If we rightly guess the simple truth,
Your heart has drunk from the springs of youth;
And of wedded love the vision true
Throughout the years has dwelt with you.

We heartily wish that this new year
May bring to your home most gladsome cheer,
And that still others rich in blessing
May cycle in for your possessing.

At last, when your latest sun sinks west,
May a holy trust possess your breast,
And sunset glow light the golden gate
Through which may you pass to Heaven late.

Then, forever freed from mortal fears,
Sharing the life of immortal years,
In a land where none ever grow old
God's deathless bliss shall your life enfold.

*"Bon Voyage" to
My Granddaughter*

When oceans wide and fleeting days
Shall far divide our friendly ways,
May mornings bright and ev'nings gay
Cheer all the pathways of your stay:
But when your foreign riot ends
May you come back to true old friends.

*On Giving a Boxed
Rose to a Little Child*

I herewith inclose
A late fall rose,
In tints replete,
In fragrance sweet.
But of thorns upon its stem beware.
If they you sting,
Your tears will spring,
As those near by
Might see you cry.

*After Thoughts of
Robert Green Ingersoll*

Robert Green Ingersoll himself was born
The son of an "orthodox" preacher;
Of views Calvinistic, hard and forlorn,
The father was a lifetime teacher.

This father, doubtless of his kind sincere,
And as good as his creed would permit,
Seemed to have tempers and dogmas severe
Which his son enjoyed not a bit.

A moral from this we all may derive,
As relating to parent and child,
That all parents should thoughtfully strive
By methods true, decisive, and mild,

So the plastic minds of children to guide
And their loving young hearts to win
That in life later they could not deride
Views parental, not even of sin.

Robert himself was exceedingly bright,
And he early had views of his own;
He came to believe his father not right,
So took up with his own views alone.

Robert espoused the practice of law,
And early made brilliant impression
On many who his abilities saw
For success great in his profession.

But still his wide final fame did not flow
From success duly won in the courts;
He himself, and others, came soon to know—
And the fact went wide out in reports—

That for material prosperity's yield
The orator's calling none could excell;
He learned that by this art he could wield
Over vast crowds most magical spell.

In this self-appraisal Robert was right.
His fame for eloquence rapidly grew;
He on the platform was comely of sight;
In charm of speech he few rivals knew.

Ingersoll, from a standpoint true and fair,
On his merits, by truth compelled,
Should be judged. From his gifts great and rare
Recognition should not be withheld.

To falsely defame Robert's name is far
From both aim and wish as East from West;
One might not more surely his own soul mar
Than by not viewing men at their best.

But he most surely in history stands.
Time alone his true merits must scan;
The price which a fame immortal demands
Is service high for one's fellow man.

He was an "Infidel" by profession.
He himself found, for better or worse,
That the gifts great which were his possession
Could thus be used to fill up his purse.

In any event soon known he became,
Far and near, to all orthodox creeds
A foe unrelenting. God's very name
He did not revere. That God meets needs

Human because men seek Him in prayer,
He branded as mere superstition,
Of not more worth than to talk to the air
For serving man's needful condition.

Convictions by good men most cherished
He treated in terms of derision;
Christ at best had long ago perished—
Faith in Him was outgrown tradition.

By eloquence magic, with savage wit
Mingled, on the passions he played
Of credulous crowds whose minds were unfit
To detect the false tricks of his trade.

Over uncritical minds he held sway
By a logic fallacious and rash;
But from his puppets to his latest day
He himself took large tolls from their cash.

Of the masses that thronged his speech,
If in mental assayment we weigh,
When we our fairest true estimate reach,
We shall neither disown nor betray

The standards which we may rightly employ
Their psychology justly to rate;
On such premise we perforce must deny
To them talent high thought to create.

But from minds thoughtful, most valuing truth,
Few disciples to Ingersoll came;
He taught little worth for age or for youth:
Man's life at best was but a chance game.

His most vehement tirades were aimed
At the Bible. But to those who knew
The Book—men for knowledge acclaimed—
His perversions stood forth in full view.

With common crowds, themselves untaught in
truth,
Under masque of theories outgrown,
He sought to impress on age and youth
Views of the Bible long since foresworn.

Of Ingersoll, one of two things is true:
Of the Book which he sought to destroy,
He most ignorantly held a false view,
Or a mountebank's art did employ.

The Hebrew records of barbaric deeds,
Ancient conception of God most crude,
As now approvable in Christian creeds
In teaching false he sought to include.

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That such view is a gross misconception,
A view only in false premise held,
Now holds firm place in widest deduction,
By rational insight compelled.

The old Hebrew Bible, when wisely read,
In large bulk is more seen to portray
A people perverse in both heart and head,
Than a true view of God to convey.

Of biblical science in vogue to-day—
The most secure in time ever known—
Not most slight knowledge did Robert betray
Of the Book which he sought to dethrone.

Ingersoll now for long years has been dead.
Time has much dimmed his old-time fame;
But now, after all the years that are fled,
What good of him may justice claim?

If man's life is but a material thing,
If earth's brief fortune and most transient fame
Are the only good which a life may bring,
If death forever blots out one's name,

Then Ingersoll's life might stand for success.
Still, though money he put into his purse,
And though on crowds did his talent impress,
Yet death must end all life's boon or curse.

Still, in wide contrast to Ingersoll's thought,
Christian motives with countless mankind
Have through long ages in human souls wrought
Ideals benign best known to man's mind.

Christian ideals lowly men have inspired
To deeds worthy of high moral note,
And in numberless ways have conspired
Highest good of mankind to promote.

Deeds heroic, ideals lofty and pure,
Cheer of soul in common life sought,
A patience most sweet life's toils to endure—
All this in countless lives faith has wrought.

Life's mysteries deep no one can escape,
They alike confront both rich and poor;
No human wisdom is able to shape
Thought that life's deeps may fully explore.

But whatever may be mysteries dark,
Doubting cannot their shadows relieve;
To doubt leaves the soul both naked and stark
While Truth's vision it does not perceive.

Christian faith on sublime premises rests.
It posits God who rules from His throne
Over all the laws which nature attests,
Himself Lord in all moral realms known.

Then, as His crowning creative act—MAN,
Made in God's image divine, comes forth,
The *one* creature, when all earth's life we scan,
Whom God rates as of infinite worth.

It was the mission of Christ to reveal
God as Father divine of mankind;
And Christ did the truth of His mission seal
As man portraying God's loving mind.

Because mankind with God's nature is kin,
God man's life with His own life inspires;
The mind of God man's life dwelling within
Inspires man's soul with righteous desires.

In values supreme man on earth appears
Because his life with God's life is kin;
In life immortal through God's endless years
He evermore God's favor may win.

For man's life on earth Christ never gave pledge
Of exemption from toils and sorrows;
But for meeting one's ills to earth's last edge
He pledged God's aid for all life's morrows.

Christ for all men, rich and poor, high and low,
Who would Him receive, His word obey,
Gave highest assurance in His own vow
Of God's needed grace for all earth's day.

This faith millions unnumbered have cheered
Who have trodden most troublesome ways;
Martyrs in flames to it have adhered,
And saints in prison have sung its praise.

But quite aside from distinct Christian claims
The plain thought of man in widest protest
Most firmly rejects all negative aims
Which would leave man of God dispossessed.

In all man's history as now best known
The race through its psychic sense has held
That God from man's life it cannot dethrone.
This basic truth no doubt has dispelled.

Now, if against such background historic
We place Ingersoll clearly in sight,
Then his course, which seemed meteoric,
We may assay in its own true light.

He must then appear in religious thought
As one conducting a roaring farce,
An entertainment for yokel minds wrought,
While he for himself filled up his purse.

Either he in thought was false or sincere.
If sincere, he can only take rank
With men of minds most eccentric and queer,
But on whose wisdom no one could bank.

One might deny in the wide ocean's flow
Existence and course of the Gulf Stream;
Still explorers of broad seas would know
The facts which they would obvious deem.

One might deny that the earth is a sphere
And seek to persuade you that 'tis flat;
But the sailor that sails the globe each year
Is not duped by nonsense like that.

And so of Ingersoll we must conclude
That for mankind's deep moral needs
He only dealt in negations most crude,
In attempts to demolish faith's creeds.

If for the faiths which he sought to destroy
He had adduced some better belief,
The dispraises which now we employ
Might be changed to songs of relief.

But his teachings were as cruel as crude.
No single ray of relieving light
On problems dark did his teachings include;
He taught no cure for sin's baneful blight.

When he had brought forth his best or his worst,
Life's common sorrows he failed to cheer;
Human life with sin was still badly cursed—
No new hopes for man's life did appear.

Men on life's journey grew old and feeble,
Many lives still with illness were blighted;
Some their fortunes had lost, and no people
Were free from griefs not here cited.

The Christian faith which with high hopes have
cheered
Uncounted millions through ages past,
To which martyrs braving death have adhered,
A faith to inspire while ages last;

Faith in God, in His provident kindness,
In His forgiveness divine of sin;
His truth inspiring one's mind to possess,
His abiding peace the soul within;

A life immortal for all who believe,
A life for the soul of endless growth
With an urge ever for one to achieve
New wealth for himself in godlike worth;

These typical features of Christian thought,
Truths as held by men wisest and best,
Truths for mankind with beneficence fraught—
Still they all met the doubter's protest.

Ingersoll for God did Fate substitute,
For meeting man's needs no God was known;
Above human woes the Heavens were mute,
Man's life is shaped by hard Fate alone.

If this monstrous whim mankind should receive,
Then backward to the jungle man would tend:
This thought most ghastly may help to conceive
How Faith's negations at last would end.

Identity

Some day a Voice which I must obey
Shall summon me from earth away;
But whatever view awaits my soul
At the far off or more near goal,
Still I know that myself must be,
Though mortal change has come to me,
The very same person always.

My record has gone on before.
I may not even change my name,
My calling card must be the same;
My just deserts I cannot flee,
They will unerringly trail me:
For I am I forevermore
In any land, on any shore.

Sunset

My earthly sun is far down in the West,
My mortal years are nearing their goal;
But a vision true of the home of God's blest
Inspires a fearless calm in my soul.

Our Little Boy

One morn in May,
Far years away,
To the manse,
With morn's advance,
There came a guest
Of Heaven blest—
A little Boy.

A sacred day
That day of May;
For in its morn
A child was born
To bless our home:
From God had come—
Our little Boy.

The travail pain
Could not remain,
When to her breast
The Mother pressed
With love new-born
On that May morn—
Her little Boy.

In holy spell
We seemed to dwell,
Were prompted to
Our vows renew
To God above
Who gave in love
Our little Boy.

As time went on
This baby son
Grew wondrous fair;
He seemed to share
Beyond his years
The thought of seers—
This little Boy.

In nature mild,
A normal child;
In laughing glee
He played with me,
And day by day
Renewed his play—
This little Boy.

Short was his stay,
He went away;
Years briefly four,
This one short score
Did Heaven give
On earth to live—
Our little Boy.

O nameless grief
O'er life so brief!
A dark'ning pall
Was over all;
For we had lost
At priceless cost—
Our little Boy.

In Woodlawn plot,
A sacred spot,
Mid floral blooms
And stately tombs,
Was laid away
The precious clay
Of little Boy.

Now not alone
Engrav'd in stone
A single name
Through years the same,
One's eye can trace
In Woodlawn's place
Of little Boy.

Late the Mother,
Then a Brother,
Obey'd the call
Which comes to all:
Their names are seen
On Woodlawn's green
Near little Boy's.

Immortal love,
Born from above,
Not death can part
From Mother-heart:
Her joys abound
For she has found
Her little Boy.

The years have fled
Since counted dead
He went away
To Heaven's day;
And still no word
By us is heard
 From little Boy.

God's ways are best,
In Him we rest;
In climes unknown
He loves his own:
We cannot weep,
He's in God's keep—
 Our little Boy.

By Rachels shorn,
By all who mourn,
No sweeter word
Was ever heard
Than Jesus said:
"They are not dead,
 Your Children lost."

“In Heaven’s light
They walk in white;
In love’s embrace
They see God’s face,
And ever there
His nature share,
Those Children lost.”

In countless throng
The years along,
In gladsome day
From earth astray
The angels greet
The coming feet—
Of Children lost.

We on this side
The Great Divide,
But dimly know
How children grow
In God’s vast school
Divine of rule—
These Children gone.

Life must progress
In Heaven not less
Than here we plan
From babe to man;
The child's estate
From less to great—
Must ever grow.

Faith does not lie,
Love cannot die:
Since God is just,
We fully trust
His perfect way
With loved ones gone.

In some fair day,
Not far away,
Myself shall stand
In God's own land,
Where I shall meet
And joyful greet—
My Boy, My Boy.

The Life Immortal

One fateful fact I know is true:
From mortal paths my feet shall stray,
And I from earth shall pass away;
I know no hour, no gate ajar,
From whence my soul shall travel far
Beyond the sunset's golden bar
To scenes unknown to mortal view.

In some new land my eyes shall see
Once more my earthly loved ones lost;
The vision of a shining host,
God's elect—my thought engages—
Saintly souls of all the ages,
Prophets, heroes, kings, and sages—
With such I shall forever be.

No aimless life dwells on that shore.
Truth-loving minds the vision true
With tireless zeal shall still pursue;
From more to more shall knowledge grow,
From boundless fields its wealth shall flow
To minds who would their secrets know:
And this shall be forevermore.

God's cosmic book of mind and deed
On ev'ry page speaks thought divine,
All wisdom from its pages shine;
Still man, by God's own Spirit taught,
Himself alone can trace God's thought
In all creation's wonders wrought:
And he alone the book can read.

Man's mind, lighted by torch divine,
Can bring to life dead ages past,
At will can roam the spaces vast;
God made man's mind for ceaseless quest,
Its energies may never rest:
By ever-growing truth possessed—
Its glories must forever shine.

Man not alone in mind is great.
He is creation's crown and end,
From God's own life does his descend;
Heir of the last creative word,
Ordained to be creation's lord
For rule supreme o'er beast and bird—
Man mind and soul did God create.

To God man's soul is kin divine.
Within the soul does God reside,
From lofty shrines He turns aside;
His dwelling is the contrite heart,
A shrine unknown to templed art,
And from this shrine He'll ne'er depart
While being lasts, or light shall shine.

Through ages past—a countless score—
No builder of God's altar-hearth
Was known in all the throngs of earth;
Then God, who would His nature share
With one who might His image bear,
Created man his child and heir:
And man shall live forevermore.

God's Fatherhood by Christ made known
Is clearest pledge that God could give
That man with God shall ever live;
Man's mind God's truth shall still pursue
While man himself the ages through
Shall ever grow in likeness true
Of Him who rules from Heaven's throne.

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